

THE BIN LADENS

AN ARABIAN FAMILY
IN THE AMERICAN CENTURY

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Siddeley private jet that Salem had purchased prior to his death. It was a sleek, spacious two-engine executive jet that could carry a dozen or more passengers. Ghalib had the piloting skills to evaluate the plane's readiness, and as Bakr's full brother, he had his trust. He had matured into a smart, sharp-minded administrator who did not suffer fools and who could act decisively, in the judgment of one business partner who worked with him extensively. He had two sons; his wife increasingly kept the veil.¹⁷

On April 22, Ghalib flew to San Diego, where one of his youngest half-brothers, Abdullah, was enrolled in university. He flew on to Honolulu, then Guam, and reached Hong Kong on the 24th. Gerald Auerbach, the family pilot, had joined the flight, as had a second Pakistani pilot and the mechanic Bengt Johansson. They flew to Kuala Lumpur, and then to Bombay. On the evening of April 27, 1989, they continued on to Peshawar. They checked into a hotel in the city, and Ghalib Bin Laden and one of the Pakistani pilots traveled by road to the Afghan frontier.¹⁸

According to two people who were on the trip but who did not travel out from the Peshawar hotel, Ghalib carried about fifty thousand dollars in cash. One of these people, Auerbach, recalled that the money was destined for Osama because he was in need of "some cash." The second passenger, Johansson, said that he was told by the Pakistani pilot who went out from the hotel that they sought to distribute the money as a Ramadan gift to poor people living in a refugee camp. By Johansson's account, this act of charity turned dangerous. "They were almost killed there" and "had to jump over some fences" because a crowd of refugees, seeing Ghalib's bag of money, decided to rush him, rather than wait for an orderly distribution of charity. A family attorney said that Ghalib recalled that "the cash which he [Ghalib] took with him from Peshawar was distributed to the poor in refugee camps" and was not provided to Osama; the attorney emphasized that Ghalib had never provided financial or other support for Osama's terrorism.¹⁹

At the time of this visit, Osama was suffering through the most try-

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